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Southern Rhodesia Apr 1966

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**Current Intelligence Country Handbook**

# **SOUTHERN RHODESIA**



**DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE**  
**Office of Current Intelligence**

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## SOUTHERN RHODESIA

### 1. Political

The regime of Prime Minister Ian Smith declared the British colony of Southern Rhodesia independent on 11 November 1965 after more than two years of inconclusive negotiations with the UK. Smith's action was based on the belief that if Southern Rhodesia remained under British control, London would insist on majority rule before independence and, hence, turn power over to the four million Africans who would use it against the interests of the 220,000 whites. Under the 1961 constitution and as continued in the post-independence document, the white minority has full control of the centralized parliamentary government. It casts the overwhelming majority of votes in a complicated election process which excludes all but a handful of Africans from the electorate because most of them do not meet certain educational and economic qualifications. There is no constitutional provision which prevents the white minority from using its electoral majority to institute further restrictions once large numbers of Africans can meet the present voting qualifications.

Smith's political party, the Rhodesian Front (RF), swept the May 1965 elections with the support of a white electorate grown increasingly intransigent under British pressure for majority rule. Not all whites, most of whom are of British extraction, who voted for the RF in May 1965 supported the break with Britain the following November. The overwhelming majority supported the Smith government once the break had occurred, however, largely because they believed that if the British Labor government regained control of the territory, it would impose quick majority rule in response to the demands of radical Africans in Southern Rhodesia and elsewhere. A small minority of whites in commerce, education, religion, the civil service and the judiciary preferred to negotiate legal independence with Britain with certain guarantees for eventual majority rule. This small group, however, had no power and very little appeal in the country. Their position may become strengthened, however, if the consequence of British-inspired economic sanctions against Southern Rhodesia becomes more widely and deeply felt.

Rhodesian Africans currently pose no threat to the government. The Smith regime has extensive emergency powers to deal with any dissidence, and it uses them effectively. The African nationalist movement is split, mostly on personal grounds, between two organiza-

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tions—the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU)—whose two respective leaders, Joshua Nkomo and Ndabaningi Sithole, are in jail or under detention along with more than 2,000 of their top organizers. Urban Africans, with very minor exceptions, have remained politically quiet since independence, apparently preferring not to engage in activities which could lead to rigorous security counter measures and dismissal from their relatively well paying jobs. Moreover, many African workers are not Southern Rhodesians but migrants from Zambia and Malawi. Rural Africans have never been very active in modern politics, mainly because the nationalists have been unable to mobilize them. For the most part they remain under the influence of their chiefs who are unwilling to stand up to the government. The 13 African members of the 65-seat legislature have no mass support.

Southern Rhodesia's well-trained but small army and air force, equipped with jet aircraft, together with a larger irregular Territorial Force and its police force are capable of effectively dealing with any military threat from hostile African neighbors. Joint consultations on common security problems are held with the appropriate government agencies in South Africa and Mozambique.

## 2. Economic

The Rhodesian economy is well-developed, second in sub-Saharan Africa only to the Republic of South Africa. The country's white farmers have given it a modern agricultural sector whose tobacco crop is Southern Rhodesia's major export commodity, accounting for one-third of total sales abroad. Sugar is an increasingly important agricultural product. A diversified industrial base exists, whose products include automobiles, basic and manufactured iron and steel, textiles, and oil and chemical products. Mining accounts for about 20 percent of total exports. The most important mineral products are gold, asbestos, copper, chrome, and coal. A major deficiency is lack of local crude oil production. Rhodesia is the largest supplier of chrome to the US, and it produces roughly 60 percent of the world's annual production of tantalum—a mineral essential in the manufacture of spacecraft and satellites.

The modern sector employs about 90,000 whites, a sizable number of whom are in service industries. Roughly 600,000 primarily unskilled Africans work in the modern economy, including many migrants from Zambia and Malawi. Most Rhodesian Africans, however, live in a subsistence agricultural environment.

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Foreign trade is important in Southern Rhodesia's economy. Over two-thirds of the gross value of agricultural output, an even higher percentage of mined products, and at least 30 percent of locally manufactured goods are sold abroad. Also, much of Southern Rhodesia's financial, trade, and transport services are engaged primarily in assisting exports. Britain and Zambia each buy about 25 percent of Southern Rhodesia's sales abroad. Zambia is the major foreign market for Southern Rhodesia's manufactured goods, and its copper mines depend on Rhodesian coal as well as the Kariba hydro-electric power plant and the railroad network with Southern Rhodesia, which Zambia and Southern Rhodesia jointly own but which Southern Rhodesia physically controls.

Rhodesian whites had hoped that independence would bring increased foreign investment, white immigration, and economic growth. Instead, they have been confronted by economic sanctions imposed by Britain and the governments of most of the other industrialized nations. These sanctions have forced Southern Rhodesia to reduce its level of economic activities while attempting to forge new foreign trade links.

### 3. International Relations

Southern Rhodesia is almost totally isolated in the international community. Every country in the world still recognizes Britain's *de jure* sovereignty there. No country has formal diplomatic relations with Salisbury, although several, including Britain and the United States, still have representatives there. Even neighboring South Africa and Portuguese Mozambique have been more nearly neutral in the Rhodesian crisis than the Smith government had hoped, although they sympathize with the white-dominated rebel regime.

Southern Rhodesia's major international problem is to circumvent the economic sanctions against it designed by Britain to topple the rebel regime and return the country to British control. With the exception of South Africa, the governments of all of Southern Rhodesia's major trading partners have substantially followed Britain's sanctions policy. That policy has provided for Zambia, Rhodesia's second largest market, to ban only about 30 percent of its normal trade until Britain with Western assistance can reduce Zambia's economic dependence on Southern Rhodesia for the duration of the boycott.

Other black African countries have temporarily acquiesced in Britain's sanctions policy even though many of them are deeply frustrated at the continued existence of the Smith regime. Many African governments believe Smith can only be brought down by UK military

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action. The African states have recognized their own impotence to settle the Rhodesian problem alone. Only the most radical governments followed the OAU's resolution to break relations with Britain over the Rhodesian crisis. A special meeting of African and other Commonwealth members decided, with certain reservations, to give Britain's sanctions policy until July 1966 to end the white Rhodesian's rebellion before taking further action.

The rebel regime may survive the July date because of circumvention of the oil embargo across South African and Mozambique borders and if it sells its major export commodity—tobacco—to international speculators. In that eventuality, African governments may try to provoke British military intervention by taking the problem to the UN for Chapter VII action or by promoting sabotage within Southern Rhodesia. Britain, however, would face considerable difficulties of logistics and transportation in attempting a military solution of the Rhodesian crisis.

#### 4. Subversion

There is no Communist Party in Southern Rhodesia. Both ZAPU and ZANU, denied normal political opposition activities, have openly called for the overthrow of the white regime by force if necessary, and both have exile organizations who claim to be engaged in subversive preparations. An unknown but relatively small number of ZAPU members have received guerrilla training clandestinely in Zambia, Algeria, and Egypt, and some sporadically in the USSR and Communist China. OAU states and some Communist countries have reportedly supplied the African organizations with money, arms, ammunition, and explosives. An OAU group is currently training Rhodesian African saboteurs in Tanzania. The political docility of the Rhodesian African population, the refusal by Zambia to allow saboteurs to use its territory to infiltrate Southern Rhodesia, and, most of all, the effectiveness of the Rhodesian security forces have, however, made the subversive threat of these organizations almost nil. Conditions could change, however, if continued sanctions lead to mass unemployment among Rhodesian Africans and if, at the same time, the continued survival of the Smith regime leads other countries, including Zambia, to give more support to subversive activities.

#### Chronology of Key Events

- 1889 (October) British Queen grants Cecil Rhodes' British South Africa Company a Royal Charter for Southern Rhodesia.
- 1923 (September) Southern Rhodesia becomes a self-governing Colony of the United Kingdom.

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- 1953 (September) Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland inaugurated.
- 1961 (July) Referendum approves proposals for new Southern Rhodesian Constitution.  
Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) formed to replace previously outlawed nationalist parties.
- 1962 (December) Newly formed Rhodesian Front wins general elections.
- 1963 (December) Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland dissolved.
- 1964 (November) Predominantly white electorate approves independence under 1961 Constitution in a referendum.
- 1965 (May) Rhodesian Front sweeps general election.  
(November) Prime Minister Smith makes a unilateral declaration of independence.  
UK initiates economic and political sanctions.

**Selected Factual Data****LAND**

151,000 sq. mi.; 40% arable (of which 6% cultivated); 60% available for extensive cattle grazing; European alienated lands (farmed by modern methods) 35%, African 46%, Crown 11%, 8% not alienated

**PEOPLE**

Population: 4.35 million; males 15-49, 995,000; 500,000 fit for mil. service; average number reaching mil. age (18) annually about 40,000

Ethnic Divisions: 95% Bantu, 5% European

Religion: 90% animist, 10% Christian and Muslim

Language: English official; Chishona and Sindebele also widely used

Literacy: 20%

Labor force: 691,000 wage-earners (1963); 603,000 Africans, 88,000 Europeans; 38% agr., 23% mining, mfg., construction, 39% transport and services

Organized labor: most European wage-earners are unionized, but only a small minority of Africans

**GOVERNMENT**

Capital: Salisbury

Regional breakdown: 11 magisterial districts

Type: typical parliamentary governmental structure; declared independence from UK 11 Nov. 1965

Government leader: Prime Minister Ian Smith

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Suffrage: extremely complicated franchise designed to give disproportionate weight to white vote

Elections: must be held every 5 years

Political parties and leaders: Rhodesian Front, Prime Minister Smith; Rhodesia Party (RP), David Butler; opposition United People's Party, J. Gondo

Voting strength (1965 elections): Rhodesian Front won 50 seats in Parliament; United People's Party holds 10 of the 15 opposition seats

Communists: negligible

Other pressure groups and leaders: (African nationalist organizations banned from political activity); People's Caretaker Council also called Zimbabwe African People's Union, Joshua Nkomo; Zimbabwe African National Union, Ndabaningi Sithole

Member of: association with Commonwealth broken upon declaration of independence

## ECONOMY

GDP: \$970 million (1964)

Agriculture: main crops — tobacco, cattle, cotton, sugar, corn, and peanuts; generally self-sufficient in basic foodstuffs except wheat

Major industries: mining and highly diversified small-scale industries; iron and steel complex; oil refinery at Feruka has 20,000 bbls. per day capacity

Electric power: 1,177 mw. capacity (1964); 3.9 billion kw.-hr. produced (1964), 2 billion kw.-hr. for domestic consumption

Exports: \$405 million (1964); tobacco, chrome, asbestos, gold, sugar

Imports: \$307 million (1964); petroleum products, wheat, machinery and transport equipment

Trade: major partners (prior to 11 Nov. 1965) — UK and Commonwealth, Zambia, South Africa

Aid: US economic assistance \$0.1 million in FY 1964, IBRD loan

Exchange rate: 1 Rhodesian pound=US\$2.80 (official)

Fiscal year: 1 Jul.—30 Jun.

## COMMUNICATIONS

Railroads: 1,610 mi. narrow gage (3'6"); 26 mi. double tracked; government owned

Highways: 47,756 mi.; 3,401 mi. paved, 18,281 mi. crushed stone, gravel, stabilized soil, or improved earth; 26,074 mi. unimproved earth

Inland waterways: 175 mi. on Lake Kariba

Pipelines: crude oil, 10 mi.

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Airfields: 169 total; 8 with permanent-surface runways; 1 with runway 8,000–11,999 ft.; 12 with runways 4,000–7,999 ft.

Civil air: 25 major transport aircraft

Telecommunications: telephone, telegraph, and telex services fair; numerous carrier-equipped open-wire systems; 6 AM and 2 TV stations; 92,000 telephones

#### DEFENSE FORCES

Personnel: army 3,000, no navy, air force 994 (123 pilots), police 5,100

Major ground units: 2 brigade headquarters, each with subordinate infantry and support units

Aircraft: 66 (58 jet-powered, including 8 turbine helicopters)

Supply: provided by UK (prior to declaration of independence on 11 Nov. 1965)

Military budget: for fiscal year ending 30 Jun. 1966, \$17,000,000; over 8% of total budget

#### National Intelligence Survey (NIS) Material

The following sections of the NIS are relevant:

NIS Area 57 (Zambia, Rhodesia, and Malawi)

Sec. 20 Introduction—Military Geography

Sec. 21 Military Geographic Regions

Sec. 23 Weather and Climate

Sec. 24 Topography

Sec. 25 Urban Areas

Sec. 30 Introduction—Transportation and Telecommunications

Sec. 31 Railway

Sec. 32 Highway

Sec. 38 Telecommunications

Sec. 45 Health and Sanitation

Sec. 62 Fuels and Power

Sec. 63 Minerals and Metals

Sec. 91–94 Map and Chart Appraisal

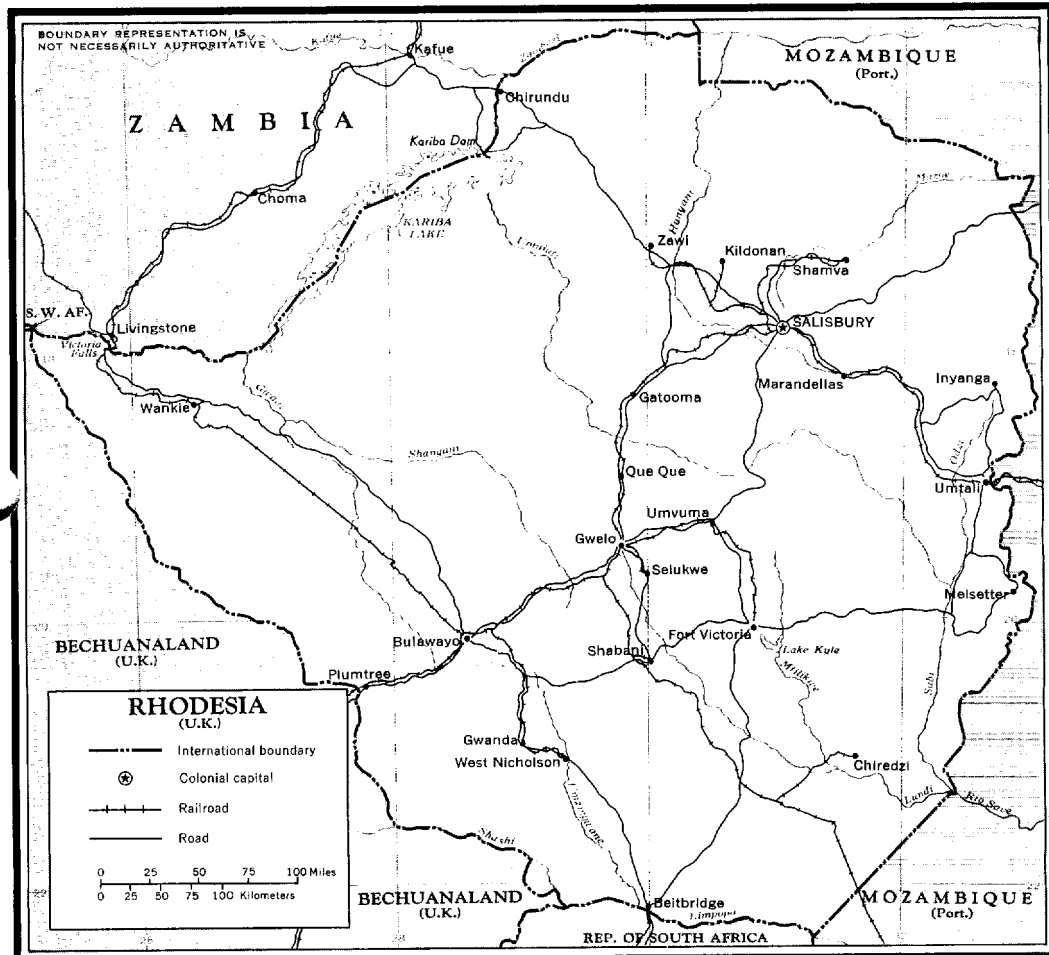
Gazetteer

#### Map

The best available general reference map is: Federal Department of Trigonometrical and Topographical Surveys, Rhodesia and Nyasaland; *Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland*; 1:2,500,000; Federal Atlas Map No. 3; 1960.

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